Research paper Arianna Lavore "How Covid-19 influenced migration processes and mobility "

During the last two years, we experienced a life-changing event i.e. the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst it deeply affected public health, its consequences can be seen also onto migration flows and mobility of people in an inter-European vision but not only.

Digging a big into the past, it appears evident that there had been precedents like Spanish flu or Ebola. The first one happened between 1918 and 1920 , mainly in Europe ,set of the World War I; mobility had a huge impact of the movement of people for war reasons onto the spread of the virus. In addition, the origins of the virus that seemed to be traced in France or China led to xenophobia episodes towards all work migrants and soldiers from those areas. The second virus is located mainly in sub-Saharan Africa where it was witnessed a peak of Ebola in 2014, here migration played an important role because after the first cases of Ebola even in Europe the fear of right-wing governments impulse the willing to block migration flows from Africa.

Coming to our days we were involved in the important Covid 19-pandemic which was a negatively surprising event for all us civilians but also for governments as we can see through the problems that had surfaced. The severe acute respiratory syndrome firstly reported in Wuhan(China) and coming from animals like bats, pangolin and snakes not only affected our health but our lives in general since March 2020, when OMS stated that it was an international emergency unbelievably spread from man to man by a particular mutation of genes. In fact , as International Organization for Migration stresses there has been four main problems for mobility and migration: first of all the closure of borders and its consequent impossibility to resettle refugees; then the many difficulties for working which affect especially the seasonal work migrants. In addition, the problem of the access to an efficient healthcare system particularly for those who live in poor areas and use migration only for health reasons and last but not least, the Schengen block.

Focusing on the second and fourth problem in Europe, we should start by saying that for work we witnessed significant changes. Starting from the decrease of hour rates, which was four time higher if compared to the 2009 data, that causes an increase in unemployment and the following block of mobility for all those migrant workers. The most affected countries were, amongst the others, Germany, Spain, Italy and France. Besides the promotion of telework was not a complete benefit because while hiring 33% more of people with technological abilities (especially young ones) left out all that portion of population who has not those abilities or even cannot convert previous jobs into teleworking done ones. A great example is given by agriculture where only 7% of people in rural areas of Europe was able to work during hard lockdown and after this it came the necessity of reallocate 70% of people throughout all Europe or just in another jobs. The unemployment rate in the last two years affected by the pandemic was of 86%, now the recovery seems to start but only the 40 % of people began to move like pre-pandemic, giving impulse to the already existent phenomena of regularizing those migrants already present in the European countries and blocked there due to a sort of involuntary immobility; a phenomena that really helped in many situations during hard lockdown in countries like Italy and Spain, although still debated.

On the other hand, Schengen block represented a huge impasse not only for work migration but also for the simple mobility in Europe, which up to now, precisely thanks to 1999 Schengen *Acquis*, allowed the free movement of people and goods. The *Acquis* followed the 1985 treaty signed between Benelux countries, West Germany and France, which aimed to the creation of a common area where the free trade of goods and people would be allowed without heavy and time-wasting long controls. Schengen area currently includes twenty-eight states with twenty-two of them being European with the other six states that are Iceland, Norway, Monaco, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Vatican state and Norway, a sign that the agreement gain a huge interest everywhere. With the beginning of restrictions everything changed, precisely on the 17th of April 2020, seventeen Schengen countries imposed restrictions on internal borders and banned the free movement of people¸ the only exception was the Green Lanes measure in order to allow at least the free transport network called TEN-T for medicines and food. In the meantime, five Schengen countries like Italy, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia and the Netherlands decided to not adjust its policies to the other countries ones. However, the ban on internal movements like in Italy with red, yellow and green zones and the free movement to foreign countries only for health and work reasons or to come back to home country seemed to suggest a similar way

of managing the situation. Only with the arrival of summer 2020, restrictions began to ease and more and more countries began opening its borders. A peculiar example was Italy, which opened, but it was more or less isolated by countries like France or Spain, that feared the high number of cases, something outraging according to Italian Foreign Affairs minister, Luigi Di Maio. The fear was that an uncoordinated way of managing the crisis would led to an eternal interruption of the free market and free movement of people in all Schengen area.

There had been precedents only for big events like Europeans in Belgium; the marriage of the current Spanish king Felipe VI and after the terrorist attacks in France in 2015 but the block never lasted so long.

The current situation is quite good for mobility and migration, in fact starting from April many Schengen countries started to lift all the restrictions applying only quarantines for people coming from non- Schengen countries and\ or Green Pass requirement. The rate of cases seem to be high as it can be seen on European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control maps but the need to recover the economy is high too. Nevertheless, we can still see some restrictions in countries like France or Estonia but mainly due to terrorist threats or potential risk for the society; in fact, the lift of Schengen rules can be done only for two months for emergency reasons with a thirty days renewal and for six months for foreseeable menaces.

Contemporary to the pandemic there was another striking event occurring in Britain: Brexit, but how this process was influenced by Covid-19? After the exit from European Union, the rules for foreign workers are three: having a job offer by a sponsor-licensed employer; having a RQF level 3 or higher for the job offer and having a B2 level or more for English. That represented a huge problem for a lot of workers and the consequences were almost immediate: a lack of 1.1 million of foreign workers that feared the UK internal restrictions but also the impossibility to come back, the unemployment rate that shifted from 4% to 4.5% in a matter of months and due to those factors the need to increase salaries to attire more people which led to a consequent increase in prices. Internally, the shortage of manpower especially from eastern areas of Europe like Romania and Poland caused the shortage of milk and chicken because of absence of truck drivers and the huge absence of workers for agriculture and rearing of cattle.

In conclusion it can be said that such an impressive event determined a before and after for mobility and migration, the governments need to find ways to manage the crisis that is still ongoing, it is sufficient to think about the 66% decrease of people who moved for tourism, the 74% less of air passengers and the 7% decrease in people taking public transports. The strategies have to follow a common view, something that lacked during the last two years, probably due to the unexpectedness of the pandemic, but only in that way the fear of contagion can be overcome, allowing a full movement for tourism but also for work. The pandemic also resurfaced problems like the regularization of migrants and their status: people from poorest areas of Europe were blocked at the frontiers and xenophobia and violence increased the legal status of refugee was not given exposing many migrants to criminal organizations. Strategies as the Italian one during lockdown where migrants blocked in Lampedusa were rapidly regularized in order to fulfil the absence of seasonal work in the southern part of Italy can be an alternative but not a long-term solution. Lastly, the economic and mobility recovery has to be done also through clarifying the need of quarantine and Green Pass possession for everyone or anyone since the latter has become a sort of passport but in some cases, further controls and restrictions were applied for foreigners.